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ADDRESS OF J. STROM THURMOND, GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA,  
AND STATES' RIGHTS DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF  
THE UNITED STATES, AT ATHENS, GEORGIA, OCTOBER 20, 1948

MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

I always feel at home among the people of Georgia, because of the strong ties of friendship and of kinship between Georgians and the people of my own State. Our family home is at Edgefield, just across the Georgia line near Augusta.

It is a source of particular pride to me to be able to meet with you here in Athens, a city known the world over for its contributions to the educational life of the nation, and to the social and cultural traditions of the Southland.

I am proud of the part Georgia has played in the history of America, and in the history of free men. Any lover of human liberty, any ardent advocate of constitutional government, any supporter of the sovereign rights of the individual states of this union, can stand upon the soil of Georgia and feel a new strength of purpose and a rededication to the principles which have made America free.

Men like the great Robert Toombes of Athens were courageous in their determination to protect the rights of states. And Georgians today are no less determined to preserve those principles, for they have made a great contribution in recent months to our fight to protect state sovereignty.



If Washington, Jefferson, Madison, and Lee could be with us today, their brilliant minds and their great hearts would be deeply concerned with the dangers to the American principles of individual freedom which they did so much to establish.

We are living in an age of shameful political expediency. We are witnesses of a deplorable era when our national leadership is so inept, or so greedy for power, that we no longer have in the government a positive and unshakable guarantee of our liberties.

At a time when all Americans should be united in a demonstration to the world that the democratic way of life is the best hope of free men, we find the Constitutional basis of that way of life under attack. Today, three candidates for the great office of President stand committed to measures that are unconstitutional and un-American.

The United States Constitution is the foundation of our liberties. It was purchased with the blood of American patriots. American genius made it the greatest democratic milestone in human history, and every generation of Americans has protected and shielded it from the onslaughts of tyranny and oppression.



The liberties we enjoy today are possible because the words of the Constitution guarantee human rights by means or representative democracy - - local self-government, home rule, state sovereignty, and political rule by the people.

And yet, because there are those in this country who place political gains above patriotism, we have been shamed by the spectacle of three candidates for the Presidency promising to flout the Constitution, and to open the way for the destruction of our liberties. The platforms of the three Philadelphia conventions - Republican, Democratic and Progressive - contain promises to write into our laws a program that is in every particular a dastardly threat to the American way.

This program is disguised under the false and misleading claims of its proponents that it is a "Civil Rights" program. Many of its strongest champions are fooled by these false colors. But those who originally wrote that doctrine are not fooled. Those who most ardently desire that it be forced upon America are very well aware of its destructive force.

One of the greatest lessons of recent history is that a very plain political evil may often be ignored. Both Hitler and Stalin have proved that the way to get a lie accepted is to repeat it constantly. That is why the treacherous proponents of so-called "Civil Rights" sing so loudly and so long.



They hope that the noise and confusion will make us ignore the danger underneath. By forcing Truman, Dewey, and Wallace to bid for the votes of a minority bloc, by promising to violate the Constitution, they hope to break down the fundamental guarantees of our liberty.

But, ladies and gentlemen, all Americans are not so easily fooled. All Americans are not so politically helpless that they may be driven like sheep to the slaughter.

The States' Rights Democrats are going to tear down that secret curtain, split wide open that veil of lies, and we are going to smash forever the enemies of the American way!

The States' Rights Democrats recognize that never before in our history has the American people faced a greater challenge. Never before have we more sorely needed the leadership of a Washington, the brilliant humanity of a Jefferson, and the patriotism of a Patrick Henry.

The challenge is clear. Those who claim the political leadership of this nation, have made it perfectly plain that they have not the wisdom to protect us against the inroads of tyranny. They have made it perfectly clear that they do not know, or do not care, why we in America have been able to preserve our liberties, while Europe lies prostrated by the encroachments of the total state.



They have demonstrated that they have not the vision to maintain our representative system of government through the Constitution, and that they are willing to sell it out to win an election.

When Truman, Dewey, and Wallace, began to bid against each other for the temporary favor of a special group, they wrote a disgraceful page in the history of mankind's attempt to govern himself in a democratic way.


There can be only one response to their treachery.

I say to you, that not a one of these three deserves the office of President of the United States!

The States' Rights Democrats have recognized that the best opposition to any such assault upon our basic rights is in the traditional American way -- through the ballot box. The government of this country belongs to the people. They cannot leave their rights in the hands of a Chief Executive who must violate them to carry out his promises.

That is the challenge. Every vote for Truman, Dewey, or Wallace, is a vote for a program which would undermine the foundations of our liberties. Every vote against them is a vote for the American way -- a vote that will stand forever as a declaration of faith in our democratic form of government.





We do not ask you to believe that the enactment of the mis-named Civil Rights proposals would automatically convert America into a totalitarian state. But we do maintain that they would be so vast a step toward dictatorship that nearly all our protection against it would be destroyed.

We maintain that these proposals would make radical changes in the American way of life, not only in the South, but in every state of the Union. In our own Southern states, their enactment would lead to violence, lawlessness, and racial discord-- where order now prevails, and where the two races are moving upward together toward economic and spiritual progress for all people.

A careful study of the Truman, Dewey, and Wallace proposals leaves no room for doubt. Each one is in direct violation of the Constitution. Each one would take away a fundamental right of Americans.

The Anti-Poll Tax Bill would usurp the right of the states to establish voting qualifications -- a clear Constitutional guarantee.

The Anti-Lynching Bill would usurp the functions of the state legislatures, and of the state courts, in dealing with crimes which occur within the states.



The Anti-Segregation proposals would interfere with state and local laws dealing with the separation of the two races, and thus take away the right of the people to establish social codes suitable to them.

The FEPC Bill, most vicious of the lot, would assume the right to regulate private businesses and private employment within the states.

And finally, the special Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice would create a national police force that would invade the functions of state, county, city and town policemen, and of duly elected sheriffs.

It is difficult to believe that such a deliberate attack upon our way of life could ever have been proposed in America. It is hard to believe that this wholesale onslaught upon our Constitution could have come so near to winning the approval of our Congress. And yet we have seen the Democratic, Republican, and Progressive Parties united in a flagrant promise that it will be enacted.

I defy those promises. I am dedicated to the belief that the American people will stop that evil program, and stop it in this election!



Let us examine briefly the terrible effect of the so-called "Fair Employment Practices Act" promised by Truman, Dewey, and Wallace. There is nothing in the Constitution giving Congress power to impose this act, which would force a business man into involuntary servitude, because it would force him to employ persons unsuitable to his business. It would force a working man into involuntary servitude by forcing him to stay on the job with people he does not like, and to take into his labor unions those he wants to keep out.

This law is already in effect in certain states, including New Jersey, Massachusetts, and New York. We do not deny the right of these states to adopt it if they wish. But let us study some provisions of the New York law to see how the federal law might work.

Under the New York law:

It is unlawful to ask a man who has changed his name what his name had been before.

It is unlawful to ask a man's birthplace, or the birthplace of his parents or his wife.

It is unlawful to ask an applicant for employment to show a birth certificate.

It is unlawful to ask a man's religious affiliations, and even to ask whether or not he is an atheist.



It is unlawful to tell an applicant that your firm observes certain holidays, and only such holidays -- such as the 4th of July, or Christmas, or Decoration Day.

It is unlawful to inquire the complexion of an applicant, and it is even unlawful to ask him to attach a photograph of himself to the application.

It is unlawful to ask a man whether he is a naturalized or native-born citizen, or whether his parents were, and you cannot ask him for his naturalization papers.

And the worst provision of all -- It is unlawful to inquire into the military experience of an applicant, or ask him where he was during World War I. He could have been in jail for deserting, or he could have been fighting our soldiers -- but you must not ask him about that.

Is that what you want in Virginia -- in Maryland -- in Kentucky -- and all over this country?

Of course, these are rules and regulations of the New York Commission, but the federal law provides the same power to the federal Commission to set up similar rules and regulations, and to force them on the country.

Let me point out that Governor Dewey endorsed that law in New York, and now his platform promises to foist it upon



every state of the nation.

I would ask Governor Dewey, and President Truman, and Mr. Wallace, whether they did not know that this FEPC is the main plank in the Communist platform, and that it is based on a law that helped to put Joe Stalin in power in Russia.

It is obvious that the Communists would use this law to force their agents and saboteurs into all the secret places of our defense program, including the atomic laboratories.

My friends, I have said this before, and I say it again now:

The American people are not going to furnish to our Communist enemies a ready-made weapon for our own destruction!

We who have continued to raise our voices against this un-American doctrine had hoped that, through the agency of the great National Democratic Party, we might deal it a crushing blow. But at Philadelphia we saw that our Party leaders had sold themselves down the river to this Russian program. We saw that the national leadership of the Democratic Party had committed itself to selling out our rights for base political gain.

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We saw that the integrity of the Democratic leadership had gone the way of the Republicans and the way of the Wallace Progressives. And we knew that we must provide a medium through which the American people could repudiate that leadership, and restore the Democratic Party to the ideals for which it has stood more than a century.

Votes that are cast for the States' Rights Democrats will be votes that will stand for all time as the declaration of good Americans that democratic principles must not be sacrificed for political expediency.

All the opposition we have had has come from politicians who insist that the political machine must be served first, and our country second. We deny that. We deny that the cheap political designs of the moment are more important than the historic principles of American democracy.

There are those who fight us by pretending that our campaign is helping Governor Dewey. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have received thousands upon thousands of pledges of support from persons who would have supported Dewey if our ticket had not been placed in the field. They are happy to support us, because they know that a vote for Dewey is



exactly like a vote for Truman, when it comes to the unconstitutional proposals they both have endorsed.

I would answer such critics by pointing out that Governor Dewey publicly declared himself an enemy of the South when he fought our efforts to win equal freight rates. For many decades the South has suffered from the economic injustice of freight rates which were deliberately made higher than those charged in the East and North. Last year, the Southern Governors won their battle for the equalization of freights rates. But they won it over the outspoken opposition of Dewey, who declared that the rate system was necessary to protect Northern interests.

I ask Governor Dewey how he expects the Southern states to solve their problems and raise their standards of living, if he insists on keeping us in the strait-jacket of unfair freight rates?

The record of the Republican candidate in opposition to Southern progress is well known. I do not see how such a man can claim a single vote in the South!

Our cause is the cause of all good Americans who realize that we must voice vigorous opposition to a trend in government which can take away our individual liberties under the Constitution.



When the States' Rights Democrats nominated their candidates for President and Vice-President, they felt that if they could carry the electoral votes of even a single state, they would win a victory for their cause.

But the movement has gained such widespread and enthusiastic support that it now appears probable that we shall go into the electoral college with more than 100 electoral votes. This may well prevent any candidate from getting a majority in the electoral college, and the President will have to be chosen by the House of Representatives, as the Constitution provides.

In the House, each state casts a single vote. In January, a new House will choose the President if no candidate has a majority in the Electoral College, and the smaller states will have an excellent chance, for the first time in recent history, to name a President whom they want, because they will have the balance of power.

That is the first aim of the States' Rights Democrats. But we are not making a bid for political power in the selfish sense. It is not necessary that we win the Presidency to gain our objectives.

By rolling up a great vote for the States' Rights movement, we shall bring about the rededication of the great Democratic Party to its traditional principles, and return it



to its historic functions in the nation's political affairs.

But the strength of our vote, we shall crystallize opposition to the dangerous legislation endorsed by Truman, Dewey, and Wallace, and thereby strengthen the position of those in the Congress who are standing firmly on the principles of states' rights.

By standing united in this election, we shall regain for the South a voice in the political affairs of the nation. And we shall demonstrate that it is unprofitable for national political leaders to traffic for the favor of minority blocs, to the jeopardy of the liberties of the American people.

In this grave hour when the peace of the world is at stake, and when the spread of Communistic ideologies threatens to engulf the earth, the American people cannot afford to ignore the internal dangers to their freedom. We must renew and refresh the spirit of democratic self-government which is our hope at home, and the hope of the entire world.

We must hold fast to our faith in the individual man, so that it may be a light unto the pathways of the down-trodden and the oppressed, among the men of all nations.